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SUCCESS

By ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY

We are a small community here in San Martin, far enough from the great city to have a life of our own, yet near enough to feel the stir and the urge. Perhaps that is what my friend Horton Carey had in mind when he suggested, a few nights ago, that his success with us had something of the metropolitan note.

It was after the production of his play by the Wednesday Players, in the high school auditorium. Horton had been, for some pleasurable minutes, surrounded by an effusive group of ladies who assured him that the play was the finest thing they had seen all season and that it was certain to make a quick march to the professional stage. Afterwards, he and his wife took me away with them. With me, as a boyhood friend, Horton could give free play to the feelings of satisfaction that he had modestly restrained before the ladies. We sat up talking until almost morning.

Sitting across from him there in his room, contributing what fuel I could to his fires of enthusiasm, I was thinking much of the time of Bolin. Bolin has entered only in a very remote way into Horton's life, yet somehow he always comes to my mind when Horton is celebrating a triumph. But of course I never tell Horton of this. He would feel deeply hurt and maligned.

That night after the play was certainly no time for a mention of Bolin. Horton was in one of his most triumphant moods. Every now and then he burst out, "Do you remember when we were kids I always said I'd do

something like this?" If I had reminded him that the boyhood dreams hadn't had exactly this goal, he would have laughed with some pity and some scorn of the boy he had been.

But I find it hard to laugh when I remember that eager, ambitious youngster. We all had our dreams in those far days; but Horton was different from the rest of us in setting himself actively to the attainment of his. He was going to be a writer: a great writer; to achieve this end, he wrote. Even in high school days he was constantly founding "magazines" of one sort or another. The issue was usually limited to the number of copies that could conveniently be made with carbons in the typewriter. Besides being editor and chief contributor, Horton was a large proportion of the subscribers to his sheets. But he was learning to write.

In those days, too, he began to send out his wares to the magazines. One editor, recognizing the boy beneath the extravagant prose, sent him a friendly letter, which made Horton forever after hotly resent the stereotyped rejection slips that fell to his lot in such bewildering numbers.

One evening not long ago I happened to drop in on Horton when he was clearing away some old accumulations of papers. There were several of the early manuscripts in the box. He tossed them over to me with an apologetic laugh. I glanced at one or two of them — crude, of course; artificial in expression and immature in thought; but honest, sincere, alive. I couldn't help saying to him, "There's something here that I don't find in your new stuff."

He took it lightly enough. "That's why my new stuff gets by," he said with a laugh.

It was in our college days that Horton began to consider his earlier ideals something of a handicap. He didn't exactly relinquish them; he merely got the whip-hand over them. We fellows used to get together in someone's room at night and advance to the attack upon

the universe behind a barrage of cigarette smoke. And here it was decided that you were doing no wrong in giving the world what it wanted, so long as you kept intact your own loftier standards and fully realized the paltriness of the world's desires.

I believe that Horton gave no more than a halfway allegiance to this creed at the time. There was still that same earnest quality in the work he was turning out. He used to insist to me that he was going to fight out the battle on his own ground, that he was going to make the very goodness of his work as positive and compelling a quality as the sensationalism of the stuff generally in demand.

Just what gave him the turn in the other direction, I don't know. Perhaps some member of the family intimated that writing divorced from money making was scarcely respectable. Horton had a sufficient income from some legacy to be beyond the usual worries; he was free to that extent to devote himself to art; but not free from the influence of the substantial tradition that measures achievement in dollars. Perhaps his father or mother, or some worthy uncle or aunt, said to him, "It's fine that you're going to be a writer; but remember that that is a *business* like any other."

Or it may be that he picked up the idea at the Extension classes in story-writing that he began to frequent. From these classes, in charge of a somewhat cynical newspaper man of middle years, Horton didn't expect to learn much about writing; but he wanted to know more about "selling;" and he had his reward in liberal talk of "markets." He used to report with great glee the enthusiasm of the young ladies over the rates paid by the big-selling magazines. But gradually the spirit of the thing got into his blood. He didn't even feel the need to make apologies when he announced to me that he was "going to give 'em what they wanted." Not permanently, of course; just to gain a hearing; afterwards he could re-

turn to his better things. It was much the same process, you understand, as that of the itinerant drug peddler who used to do a song and dance before exhibiting his pills.

It wasn't very long before Horton reached his "market." A story that he had written coolly and scornfully according to formula was welcomed by a magazine that in college days we used to call the "Vacuum," because, we said, Nature abhorred it. But now, Horton was pleased as a child over this success with the once despised editors. He was no longer a member of the Extension classes, having acquired all the sales methods the instructor could impart; but he used to drop in occasionally and be exhibited as the man who had sold a story to "Vacuum." He was the hero of those classes. He had "arrived."

It was during those days that we first heard of Bolin. Gibson, the class instructor, had phoned to Horton that he had a "queer one" in the new group and invited us in to meet him. We got in late and sat there trying to pick him out from the other queer ones, while Gibson read to the class fragments of their own writings set side by side with extracts from O. Henry, who was, in Gibson's estimation, the apotheosis of the journalist — and thus the greatest literary artist of all times.

When the class adjourned and the young ladies gathered in groups to exchange admiration for one another's products, Gibson brought Bolin over to us. Horton, of course, received in the presentation his title of "the man who just had a story in 'Vacuum.'"

Bolin was greatly impressed. He was a little, thin-faced, eager-eyed fellow — very foreign, almost unintelligible in his excited state. He kept a passionate gaze fastened upon Horton as if to detect some radiation of glory from him.

"Mr. Bolin is a native of Russia," Gibson was explaining to us; "and he writes very interesting stories of his own people."

At that, Bolin became inarticulate with eagerness and excitement. He waved his arms, with the over-long sleeves flapping about his bony hands. He lost himself in a maze of foreign words. Finally he dropped into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"Does he write in English?" I asked Gibson under my breath.

Gibson gave me a slow wink. "Very remarkable English!"

Bolin had caught a word of this exchange. He was on his feet again, with his arms flung out.

"Your language! Your language! It is only *that* I must learn!"

"Don't learn to write it too well," Horton told him, "or you're doomed."

Bolin didn't at all understand, but he looked up to Horton with wide grateful eyes as if wisdom had come down to him from the heights.

We asked to see some of his work. Neither he nor Gibson had any sample of it at hand; but Bolin begged us to go home with him where he could lay his writings before us. His attitude toward Horton was curious; there was vast respect in it, but no awe. Horton was merely on an eminence which he himself was scaling.

We felt the savor of something like an adventure in Bolin's invitation and went with him through the streets — Horton, Gibson, and I. The young Russian talked loudly and excitedly, flinging his arms. People passing us smiled and looked critically at the rest of us for similar evidences of intoxication.

Bolin was giving us his theory of art — not at all a new or personal theory, but a passionate statement of his creed. We put it in our own words afterwards as something like this: Art is a scarcely appreciable advance toward an unattainable goal. . . . "Poor fellow!" Horton said in commenting upon it.

Bolin was being torn and battered and scorched by his

sense of impotence in dealing with the great drama of human existence. Here was life, a mystery and a marvel and a horror and a magnificence, with its threads all knotted in inextricable patterns; and to represent this to himself and to others a man had only — words. Poor Bolin hadn't even the words. Even in his own language, he assured us, he felt himself quite inarticulate before the spectacle of suffering or great joy. Yet he must write of these; he must learn the words to tell of them; it was the only thing worth living for: to make man intelligible to man.

Horton asked him about his bread-winning.

"House to house," Bolin answered briefly. This was clearly an insignificant part of his life. We had to ask a few more questions before we learned that he made his livelihood by going from door to door in the residential districts with little articles for sale — now metal polish, now brushes, or various novelties and toys. I imagine that after every day of good receipts he took several days off for his studies. He was freer than most of us.

He led us to a little hotel off Valencia Street. We went up narrow uncarpeted stairs to reach the office and "lobby," where a few men sat about in stiff-backed chairs reading newspapers. Bolin led us into the corner that promised most privacy and was gone from us only a moment to get his precious writings. He thrust a manuscript into the hands of each of us and then stood off to get the general effect of our appreciation. The whole happening had so completely the tone of the extravagant, almost of the grotesque, that we were able to meet the ordeal properly — to offer solemn comments and even to turn all our inner merriment into manifestations that pleased him.

The writings were wholly ludicrous. I have never before nor since seen anything like them. There would be a passage, a line or two, of comparatively simple and direct prose, ungrammatical and uncouth, but neverthe-

less expressive; then a wholly meaningless cluster of ornate, many-syllabled words; another phrase or two that conveyed a clear thought; and then a stark bit of sheer obscenity.

"You're right, Gibson," Horton kept saying gravely; "this is remarkable English!"

The strange thing about the medley of nonsense and vulgarity and vagueness was that it actually gave the sense of something trying to get itself said. Bolin's bright spirit was there, though almost hidden under the wreckage of his thoughts.

He was a sensitive man. But those manuscripts made us forget. We gradually let the fun we were having with them become too obvious. Then Bolin began to plead for these creations of his, to try to reveal to us the soul beneath their distorted bodies. The clothing of his thoughts, he told us, was not always his own. He went to any one here in the hotel who would grant him a few minutes of time, tried to explain what he wanted said, and accepted his collaborator's rendering. That explained much in the writings. I could hear these lobby loungers chuckling as they gave him some ribald phrase to be put gravely into written words that were meant to express beauty.

Horton turned a serious face to Bolin. "There are so many men writing just commonplace English that I should think you'd be proud of this fresh medium of yours."

We were going on in that way when suddenly a girl came in. Evidently she had heard enough to think that there was something malicious in our mockery. She took her stand in front of us and said some very distressing things. She had the vocabulary of a shop-girl; we couldn't strike back with those weapons; and as anything less sharp-edged would have been futile, we could only sit there and squirm.

Bolin tried to get in a word in our behalf; but she hung over him like an angry mother, ready to berate him

soundly for getting into a position where she had to defend him against the rest of the world.

"Look at the crazy stuff they tell you for your stories, and you put it all down!"

Horton asked her with heavy politeness, "Why don't *you* teach him how to write?"

Her blue eyes flashed back at him. "At least I don't lie about the stuff's being good when I know how rotten it is!"

We said what we could to cover our retreat and to yield us some satisfaction, in retrospect, with its careful irony. Out in the street Horton turned upon Gibson.

"Good Lord, Gibson, next time you've got a queer one for us, isolate him!"

I have seen Bolin only once since that night. But through all the years of Horton's growing importance, Bolin has been in my thoughts much more often than I should care to admit to my friend.

It was not long after the Extension class days that Horton married Claire Reynolds. Of all the girls of his acquaintance she was the one with the fullest appreciation of his potential greatness. She flaunted him as a possession worth having. It was pleasant to Horton; and Claire has never failed him in that regard. She devotes herself mainly to providing a suitably impressive background for a husband who is the town's most notable celebrity.

About the time of his marriage Horton sold several stories to magazines of the "Vacuum" type. His new wife was properly pleased with this triumph, but it did not hide from her the fact that achievement nearer home won a more immediate applause. She got him to writing little plays and occasional verse for her various church and club affairs. It was so pleasant afterwards to go about with Horton among the crowds, when the ladies of the committee were saying, "And here is the *author!*" And it brought their interests so much closer together if

she could take him around to teas where the plans for prospective plays were discussed, than if he sat off by himself in another room, writing things she had no knowledge of. People spoke of their delightful comradeship; it was quite wonderful, they said, the way Horton's wife was entering into his work.

I think that Claire was largely responsible for San Martin's pageant last spring, to celebrate the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. She didn't appear publicly as the originator of the idea, but I have no doubt she set the wheels to turning with a few discreet shoves. It was Horton, of course, who wrote the pageant. And the thing was a considerable success. One of the city papers gave us a full page in a Sunday edition. The text was quoted from at length, and Horton's picture appeared as an inset down among the bare legs of a long row of dancing girls who represented the gifts of Nature to San Martin.

The community at once planned to make the pageant an annual affair, and Horton saw himself in a measure immortalized. He studied his text carefully for anything in it that would seem antiquated and silly a hundred years hence, but found it on the whole of a universal and lasting quality.

Since then Horton has been pointed out on the streets to strangers and referred to in low tones as "the author" and "the poet." No one of social importance comes to San Martin without being told at once, "You *must* meet Horton Carey!" He is our idol and our glory.

It was in the flush of those first postpageant days that Horton remembered Bolin. He seemed to be going back over his whole life, considering it as an approach to his present eminence; all sorts of forgotten facts and faces came crowding into his consciousness. And now he was wondering if we mightn't have been too hard on the fellow; mightn't have blighted his dreams with our mockery.

We were planning a trip up to the city the next morn-

ing, and Horton said, "Let's look him up. Maybe I could do something for him."

At the Valencia Street hotel the people at first wholly failed to remember Bolin. But at last it came with a rush, the recollection of "that crazy Russian," and we were directed to an address far out on Mission Street.

This proved to be a small fruit and vegetable market. A woman came forward to us when I opened the door. I recognized her at once as Bolin's champion of that night. She had grown fat and lazy-looking, but she had the same challenging eyes and belligerent chin.

I told her that we had come to see Bolin. She said that her husband was out delivering; might be back at any time. Then I reminded her of our earlier meeting.

"Oh, yes," she said, wholly without interest.

"Does Mr. Bolin still write?" I asked her.

She gave a little shrug. "That's about all he does."

"And is he . . . succeeding with it?"

"How do you mean?"

"Does he sell his stories?"

"He don't try."

"But why not?"

She shrugged again. "They're no good. Only I don't tell him so any more. He likes to keep writing 'em."

We heard the door behind us open, and it was Bolin. He hadn't changed. He was as thin and tense and vivid as ever. I had to tell him who we were; then he admitted remembering us, and his eyes went past me to Horton.

"You've probably heard a lot of Mr. Carey since that time," I suggested.

They shook hands, and Bolin said, "Yes; I can read English pretty good now."

"Then you've been keeping up with him!" I put in helpfully.

Bolin nodded. "I read the stories in that magazine. And I read all about that show down there."

Horton was still silent, as if waiting for me to continue

as intermediary, so I said to Bolin, "Mr. Carey is pretty well established now, and he was thinking that he might do something to help you."

Bolin gave a merry laugh. I thought at first that it was a laugh of appreciation and pleasure. But it kept on too long for that. He turned his back on us and went to the stand of fruit, moved an apple on its conical pile and touched an orange lightly, smiling and chuckling, as if to share his enjoyment with them. Then his eyes met his wife's, and they both burst into loud laughter. On the flood of that gaiety we went from the shop.

JOHN BAPTIST AND THE CREATURES

By ELLEN GLINES

John Baptist was well fed;
Locusts furnished him his bread,
And since he had not any money,
Kind bees spread it with their honey.

Hungry the Baptist was, but just —
He only ate because he must:
"When men in future praise my name,
You, little friends, shall share my fame."

This was agreeable to the bees,
But locusts then were hard to please:
"A reputation posthumous,
Your Reverence, has few charms for us;

"Then why anticipate so far?
We're very well, sir, as we are!"
The hungrier the Baptist grew,
The less they saw his point of view.

THREE POEMS

By GRACE HUNTER

TO ONE QUICK

As people will,
 Bating the foolish breath,
 We talked of death
In a room firelit and still.

One spoke a quiet word:
 "‘There may be spirits here;
 We can not think how near.’"
I knew that you demurred,
Expecting me to say, "Absurd!"

A moment, though, I dared not stir;
My face was on the breast of her
 Who now three years is dead.
And all the time I felt your eyes
Upon me in estranged surprise
 But I could not turn my head.

RETURN

I wonder . . .
Do the dead come back
To watch, day-long, a tree's track
Of shadow on the grass?
To see, while slow hours pass,
The red unfold
Around the hickory's buds of gold?
To wait and catch the quiet beat
Of wings about the bittersweet?

Once when I was a child at school,
I saw the crystal fingers ice put out
To hold a roadside pool . . .

Listen . . .
What is it gropes in the tall tree-tops?
Is it music or wind?
Now the organ stops,
And the Easter singing
That set a-swinging,
Where the twigs are thinned,
The cut-leaf birch.
Is there not something more than these
Shaking the bloom on the maple trees
In the long row west of the church?

RESURGENCE

The years,
Like withered leaves
Time's unrest grieves,
Stream
From the Tree of Life.
Earth's weather wild
Has from me now beguiled
My sweetest years.

It is a dream
That I am an immortal,
Bound for a lucent portal . . .

Now am I god . . .
(Being not mythical)

The cruel years
I never can forget,
Like drops of sweat

Upon that other brow,
Gather and fall
Bitter as vinegared gall . . .

Sharp in my side
The spear points of the years
Wherewith I have been crucified.
(God realistical.)

I am a god,
Resting a space
For recovery of grace
From the dumb sod.
(Finite sabbatical.)

The grievous years,
Heavy as stone,
Are suddenly strown.
(Deus symbolical.)
No human fears
Trouble me now,
Though marked is my brow
And pierced is my side;
Both hands and feet
With labor meet
Marred down the years.
Though I am denied
And crucified
Of fellow men
Seventy times seven,
Here is my heaven:
I'll rise again
(Homo majesticical)
And yet again.

CRAZY ABOUT HER

By HAROLD CROGHAN

He stood where the narrow walk from the Halls joined the wide paving that ran before the Row. To his right was the Library, sombre and brown with age; at his left the Administration Building glittered smug and new in white marble. The boy sighed nervously and looked off in the direction in which the dignified piles stared so blankly. A gentle slope of grass, young trees; and the green broke over a bank into the dusty road. Then a long hill up which the street climbed past gaunt houses.

Two sparrows tumbled in the grass before him, fluttering and vociferous. He lowered his glance, watching them dully. Were they fighting or making love? A group of girls came out of the Library and stood on the top steps, laughing. The sparrows rose and flew off crookedly. The girls laughed. One heard the expression "musical laughter." Well, they did get off something like a trill sometimes. Anyway, there was a seduction in the noise; it made a guy want to go over and say things to them. They would giggle and gurgle until a fellow felt humorous — really humorous. He knew them all. Mabel Neal was sitting on the balustrade now, with her back to him. Mabel was keen — wonderful lines. She affected him strangely; whenever he saw her he wished he were a poet or a soldier. Something splendid like that. She begot dreams in him. It was as though he wished to be able to say to her, "Nature has made you a perfect female. Behold in me the perfect lover." Nature had done well with Mabel. But he wasn't really crazy about Mabel at all. Strange. One of those sex phenomena, perhaps, that Shorty Hirsch had been reading about. The boy said to himself, "Must take poise to be actually scientific about sex." No, he was not in love with Mabel.

He was crazy about Marie. The bell was due in a

minute and Marie would come out of the Administration Building. He had a canny knowledge of Marie's movements. "Marie." He repeated the name. "Marie." He was crazy about her. He called up an image of her and gloated over it. The languorous passion that stole over him seemed infinitely sweet.

He turned irresolutely and wondered if he should walk back to the dormitory. The girls would notice him standing around so long. There goes Irish McKim across the President's yard to ring the bell. Marie will be coming directly on her way to the library. The boy sat on the low iron railing that skirted the lawn and opened his *Horace*. He stared at the meaningless words. Dumb stuff. Like a code telegram. He was going to ask Marie if she would go to the dance with him. The dance was tomorrow night. He mustn't wait any longer. It would be so terrible if she refused that he dreaded to ask her. And she might refuse. She would do it gently of course. "I'm so sorry. I don't believe I can go. Thanks so much for asking me." Something like that she would say. He could so well imagine how she might refuse a fellow. It made his heart sick to think of it. Over at West Hall the bell sounded "Ang-bang! Bang-bang!" A thin stream of people came out of the Administration Building — a stream that ran thicker, that eddied at the door, and flowed off in two directions. The boy stared until his eyes watered.

There she was, with the fat girl from Coleridge. Oh, Marie, you are so beautiful! Will you go to the dance with me? Thank you. Rest your head on my shoulder, darling. Starlight, and alone with you.

He rubbed his moist hands upon his trousers. "Hello, Marie!"

"Oh, Harry, I meet you here so often! Do you know Miss Solfer?"

"How do you do, Miss Solfer? I guess we haven't been introduced, but I have seen you in classes."

"Why, yes; in sociology. I think you are so original, Mr. Blaisdell. It is so interesting to hear you and Doc arguing. Isn't Doc radical?"

The boy shifted his feet. He liked to have people say that he was original. But this kind of direct stuff made him embarrassed — made him want to move around. "I like him. Are you girls going to the library?"

They walked toward the Library, Marie between them and not quite abreast. The boy dropped back and his arm touched her arm. Oh, wasn't he crazy about this girl? She was smiling at him. There was a dimple creasing her cheek, and her eyes were blue. Oh, Marie, I love you so much! His eyes ravished her and sent ecstatic messages to his brain. The delicious hollow that lay sweetly below her round neck, a little valley nestling against the swell of her breasts. And his arm touched her arm. Students jostled them. They were nondescript, actors without lines. He pitied them. Miss Solfer was stretching her neck and showing her teeth. Her smile did not look happy.

"You aren't listening to me, Mr. Blaisdell. Some other time, then. When there is no one trailing clouds of glory between us." She was being good natured; she was being a good sport. She ran up the library steps. She was showing what they called delicacy.

Marie said, "Saidie is an awful good scout. We are rooming together now at Kingsbury. Don't you like her?"

"Oh, rather. She's ripping." He blushed and prickles of heat crawled across his face. That was a line he had had in the junior play. She would think he was crazy, absolutely.

"Why are you blushing? Did you say something was ripping?" She was laughing at him.

"Gee, I guess I am overcome by your beauty. Can't we go some place and sit down? Over there in the shade?"

"I'd love to stay out. It's so nice. And you would be a nice boy to sit with. But I must, I really and truly must do some reading. Well, here's Dad Holmes in person! Dad and his brief case. Dad, have you got the biology notes?"

"An old man like me always has such things. Come in and copy them. Hello, Harry."

"Hello." Dad stood on the steps swinging his brief case and looking handsome. Marie was turning away. This was an opportunity he had fumbled. Marie, don't go in the library with him! "Goodby." She was so pretty, so damn pretty.

She climbed the steps with Dad Holmes. Notice how nice her legs are? She turned and smiled dazzlingly.

He spent an hour with Big Winkle. They smoked and talked about love.

"Wink, who do you think is the best-looking girl in school?"

"Mabel Neal."

"Duke is trying to get a date with her for tomorrow night. What do you think of Marie Doran?"

"She ranks high. Dad Holmes took her to the lecture Tuesday night." And Dad was sitting with her in the library. The boy was suddenly very unhappy. "There's the bell. Are you going down town, Harry?"

"Not yet. I promised Duke to get a date and go to the dance with him tomorrow night. I don't know what woman to make happy." His voice was sort of trembling. "I must look over the field." His hands were sweating. There were sweat marks on his Horace. It would be terrible if Marie went with Dad Holmes. It sure would be terrible.

He reached home a little before supper. Joe was not in the house, so he went to the telephone. Dad was sit-

ting near the window with the paper; Mother and Florence were getting supper on the table. They would all hear him, but he was desperate. He wasn't going to wait any longer. All afternoon he had wandered about; engineering encounters with Marie. And always Dad Holmes was there swinging his brief case and looking handsome.

"Hello, is this Kingsbury Hall?" Dad rustled his paper and assumed the intent look of a person who was not listening. Florence ran into the kitchen and whispered breathlessly to Mother. They were both giggling. Then his mother said, "Don't bother him."

The boy stood at the telephone trembling. A voice said "Kingsbury Hall."

"Could I speak to Miss Doran?"

Joe came through the kitchen into the dining room. "Ma, can he speak to Miss Doran? Ma, can he? You look funny, Harry; you look like you were going to cry. Ma says you may speak. Look how red his ears are, Florence." Florence said, "Speak to her collegiate!" Dad put down the paper and cleared his throat. Dad would make them be quiet. The voice in the receiver was unintelligible. "What did you say?"

"What did you say?"

"We aren't supposed to call girls to the 'phone now. Call between seven and eight."

"Thank you."

Harry hung up the receiver and went out on the porch where it was cooler. He wouldn't ever entertain the family like that again. Dad called from the table. "Come in, Harry. Joe, you go back to the bath room and get your hands clean. Never mind, Florence, never mind being so tickled. Come in, Harry. You can have the car for your date."

Harry said "Thanks" and chewed food that was dry and unpalatable.

The boy walked down town feeling unhappy. The thing to do would be to go into the hotel and call Kingsbury and get it over with; that was what he must do: get it over with. If she wasn't going to go with him he might just as well know it. He met Duke at the corner near the Boyd House.

"Got the date all fixed? Mabel wouldn't go, so I asked her room-mate. Mabel said she had promised some one else."

"Who is her room-mate?"

"Elsa Forder. She's nice. You know, nice. Have you asked Marie?"

"Gee, kid, I haven't. I am so crazy about her I hate to ask her now. I feel unlucky. I tried Kingsbury once but they wouldn't call her."

"Well, Harry, you shouldn't have waited so damn long. They say Dad Holmes has been taking her out. Are you crazy about her, really?"

"Yes, I am. I shouldn't have put it off. It means a lot to me. You don't seem disappointed about Mabel."

"No, I am not crazy about her."

Duke scratched his ear and meditated upon Harry, who was crazy about Marie. "Come in the hotel and let's see what she says."

"You do the calling, will you, Duke?"

"She'll know it isn't you."

"I haven't ever talked to her over the 'phone. Do it for me, will you, Duke?"

"You're nervous, aren't you? Well, gosh, Harry, you ask a lot. Come on. I have to be at the postoffice right away."

Duke led the way into the anteroom, which smelled damp and faintly unclean. Water was running in the lavatory under the stairs. Harry hung back and watched Duke cross the office to the telephone. Duke was sure a good kid. He was picking up the 'phone from the cigar counter now. It would be better luck not to watch him.

Fat Danielson was listening to a salesman who was telling something in a low voice. Fat looked kind of sensual. Two traveling men were playing cribbage near the window. That would be a dull thing to do. A girl laughed in the dining room where dishes were being slammed about. Girls were always laughing. Duke was talking low and smiling at the transmitter. Oh, Lord, let her say yes! Please let her say yes!

Duke put up the receiver and turned about. He smiled. Harry smiled in reply wistfully, hopefully; but Duke shook his head. Harry hunted feverishly for a cigarette. Where were the damn things? He felt sort of sick at the stomach. "So that's all off. Oh, well, what the heck."

"Why, I tell you how it was, Harry. She wasn't in, but that Solfer woman said she thought Marie had a date for the dance. Don't worry, Harry, you'll get someone good for the dance. You can call again after a bit. I said you would. You know, maybe Solfer was just doing you dirt and wanted you to ask her."

"No, Solfer is all right. I'll see you after the mail is out."

"Call again in fifteen minutes. That's what I promised."

Harry crossed the street and went into Mildner's Pool Hall. He wouldn't ever get a date with Marie now. No sense in being optimistic. It was bad luck to be optimistic.

There was a bunch of tough kids in the place, perched upon the stools along the sides. Emmett Doory was racking balls. Emmett was sure a pale, thin kid. He looked bad.

"Duke Rolf was looking for you, Blaisdell."

"Yeh, I saw him."

The boy tried to be interested in a game of billiards. He walked back into an unspeakably dirty latrine. His hands were sweaty again. He ran some water over them. He couldn't sit down again. He walked out into

the street, and turned towards the depot. Benny James was sacking peanuts in the little portable, glass-enclosed stand at the curb. Harry thought, "He looks like a fat beetle in a glass box." Johnny Carter crossed the street.

"Let's go to the Crystal, Harry."

"No, I'm broke."

"Well, that makes it unanimous."

They walked along the littered pavement. Daddy Martin trundled his push cart past them, headed for the station to get the evening papers. They followed him. The world was dusty and warm, and shadows lay long across the street and climbed the sides of the buildings on the east side of Main Street. In the little park near the station the trees drooped and were motionless. Mr. Gardner, the editor, stood at the edge of the station platform, scribbling in his note book.

"Hello, Mr. Gardner. What time is it?"

"Twenty-one minutes to eight. The train is due now."

"Johnny, I have to see a fellow."

Harry walked back to the hotel; Fat was standing behind the cigar counter studying.

"Can I use the telephone, Fat?"

His hands were cold when he picked up the telephone. He cleared his throat. "Two, six, please." Fat looked up and listened. Someone would always be listening. "Is this Kingsbury Hall? I'd like to speak to Miss Doran." He cleared his voice again, hoping to get the tremble out of it. Fat picked up a paper and fanned him gently. "Lay off, Fat, for God's sake. I'm nervous. Is this Miss Doran?"

"Marie, will you go with me to the dance tomorrow night?" His heart bumped loudly and jerkily. Maybe he had heart disease. Funny if he would die here at the 'phone.

"To the dance? Harry, that would be ripping." She was laughing. "But I have a date."

"Thank you."

Fat looked kind of sorry for him.

THE SKETCH BOOK

RUST IN THE WHEAT

By LEO L. WARD

After pulling the four tired horses around the narrow, pointed corner, Mart Conway stopped the binder, turned in the high iron seat and shouted to a pair of shockers far behind him. "Might as well go on in, boys. No need a-waitin' for me. I'll just go on cuttin' till it's all down." The two men finished the shock they were working at and moved slowly across the stubble in the direction of a lane that led from the field.

The man on the binder turned his team into the wheat again. Only about an acre of grain remained standing, a small island in the middle of the big field. As he went up the side of the little land he kept tripping the bundle carrier at regular intervals with his foot, dropping the sheaves in even windrows along the field. His eyes caught the reflection of red light on the toe of his shoe each time his foot lifted at the lever, and he could see it shining along the two thin reins that sloped away from his hand toward the horses.

Once in a while he looked away over the field. The shocks in the distance were getting darker now, indistinct except where the sun glowed red on the tops of them. Mart could see that they were not thick — "nuthin' like other years," he said to himself. He reached forward, touched the tired off horse with the long whip, then put it back in its socket beside him, while the lash went bobbing jerkily along in the glowing air above his head.

He felt it getting cooler as he rode along; and he was glad, for it would make it easier on the team. A heavy dampness was settling over the field. The hum of the binder grew loud and hollow in the still evening. The grain was becoming tough, for the sickle pounded and

clattered with a dull sound that penetrated the constant moan of driving gears and chains and canvases. The tired horses went more slowly, rounding the sharp corners in wide, lagging sweeps. Sometimes Mart talked almost gently to his team. "Jim . . . Nance . . . in there now . . . just a little more, 'nother round er two . . . come on, boys, in there now." Two or three times at the corners he lifted the long whip and touched a rump lightly with the lash.

He wished he could get the rest of it cut in a hurry. The horses were very tired. He could see their heads drooping lower as they nodded slowly onward. He noticed their broad, shiny backs swinging under the harness, their breeching shifting with their stride, and the smears of greasy lather on their wet legs where the tugs touched. He felt the weariness of his horses in his own body, the ache and strain of their terrific pulling.

Once as he was moving down the side of the small land, the binder choked in the wet grain. Mart got down from his high iron seat and worked with the lower elevator canvas, jerking angrily at the matted straw. When he climbed back upon the binder, the dark, wet lines around his armpits were darker still with the powdered rust from the grain.

The corners were so pointed now that the horses had to make wide, sweeping reverse turns, stumbling over each other's hoofs as they dragged the binder back into the grain. Only two or three full swaths were left, and the cutting would be done. When at last these were down, a lone wisp of grain still remained standing. Mart turned his four horses at the corner and the binder, running almost empty, moaned loudly as it went up the field, neatly clipping the thin strip of wheat.

After wrapping the lines around one of the high levers, Mart Conway stepped awkwardly over the twine box to the ground. He looked thoughtfully at the binder for a while, his face already relaxed from the long strain of the

cutting. "Wish I could truck her up tonight," he said. Then a slight, grim pucker came into his lips, and he shook his head a little. "Can't do it by myself, though."

He walked slowly around the binder toward the team and began to throw the tugs over their wet backs. And a little while later he went off across the field through the dusk that was swiftly falling. He picked his way deviously among the shocks, driving one team, leading the other horses behind him, with the two jockey sticks under his arm. As he walked along, he heard the switching of the horses' hoofs through the clipped stubble. His sweaty shirt grew cold and clammy on his shoulders, and he felt the air come damp against his brow. But whenever his eyes wandered from the horses, he noticed a slight pinkish glow now touching only the cap-sheaves of the shocks.

As he drove out of the field into the lane that ran up past the cornfield and the alfalfa meadow toward the house, he stopped and went back to close the heavy gate. Then he stood for a while with one hand resting on the top plank, gazing back over the field.

"Won't make much," he said quietly to himself. "Fifteen or twenty, I reckon. . . . Never seen rust so bad. . . . Well, glad I got it all down, anyway."

The last pale hint of the sunset had left the field, and now the most distant shocks were only splotches of darker shadow against the dusk of the stubble. Far away beyond the low hedge on the Biggs place the west was still red, but its color seemed removed from the world, no longer touching even the farthest edges of the prairie. Motionless and stark, the binder off in the field lifted its black, humped form into the cold glow of the sky.

For a minute or two Mart Conway stood looking into the west. Then he turned slowly, picked up the reins and the jockey sticks, and went homeward through the shadows that crept out of the cornfield into the narrow lane.

THREE POEMS

By LEO L. WARD

VIVIAN BLAINE

"So Vivian holds him with her love, they say."

By what strange whim of the laughing stars
Or of her silly mother,
The girl was given this fateful name
And not another —

This I could never hope to learn
In a hundred years together;
For Ma Blaine's dead, and stars tell tales
Not in the fairest weather.

I can be sure of only this:
The eyes of Ma Blaine's daughter
Were like twin flames five fathom deep
In pools of sea-green water.

In the old brick house among the pines
She lived her proud life boldly;
Within the keep of her woman's ways
She smiled at all men coldly

Till Rufe Greene came from his cattle farm
Over beyond the river,
Bringing his wealth and a shining dream,
And a life to give her.

So with his wealth she bought bright gowns
And lovely silver sashes;
And with the flame of her haughty eyes
She burned his dream to ashes.

THE WAY LUKE HELD A SCYTHER

Of all forgotten things I think Luke Geiger's scythe
Is rusted most;
Hardly a neighbor remembers the way Luke used to mow,
And the way Luke used to boast!

"Cut the weeds around all my corn today,
An' got through early too.
Reckon that's a pearty good day's work
Fer an old cuss to do."

And it was. For Luke could cut more dock in an hour
Than another man in three.
And the easy way he'd hold a scythe
Was wonderful to see.

But Luke's old scythe is rusted now
Where it hangs in the shed,
And I never see fence-rows cut quite clean
Since Luke is dead.

OLD DAVE

Old Dave was like everything on his farm:
The way he nodded his head as he lurched along
Like his old piebald mare;

Like one of his own rail fences,
The way he would hobble up a hill,
And then go stumbling down;

The way he sometimes stood,
Looking over the far, dim fields,
Like his grave house back among the pines;

And in April, like his orchard trees,
Twisted and black against wet skies,
Vainly remembering other springs.

DESERT EXILE

By DORIS LUCILE BRADLEY

This unreflecting mirror is the edge of life.
Memories like alien butterflies span the intermission
Between staccato pilgrimage of desert dawn
And the half-moon's gay transition.

Here, God is a woman, as veiled as the West.
You hear Her shadowy laughter through those under-
carved red cliffs
And know you must forget your strange hushed avenues
of thought
And all the caravans that brought you gifts.

For, unlike the far plumed wilderness of sea,
The desert has no threat of immortality.

PORTRAIT OF AN INTELLECTUAL

By CLEANTH BROOKS, JR.

The gray, lean-fingered, haggard nerves
Invaded all the supple curves

That were the pliant limbs which he
Once stretched each morning lustily.

They wrapped themselves about the bones,
As moss will cover wayside stones,

And sapped the bone, and clambered on
Until all but the skin was gone.

They laced his ribs, possessed his thighs,
And hung like festoons in his eyes.
The man was deep. The man was wise.

They say his feet could make no sound —
He cast no shadow on the ground

In lifting up against the sun
A bloodless hand that clutched upon

His staff (arm without bone or vein,
A groping tentacle of brain,
Poised lightly on a polished cane).

I'VE BEEN READING —

By FRANK LUTHER MOTT

TWO MIDWESTERN POETS

A new edition of Edgar Lee Masters' *Domesday Book* appears nine years after the first publication (Macmillan, \$2.50). Extreme opinions upon this work have been common. Issued five years after *Spoon River Anthology*, and using a similar biographical method, it challenged comparison with its forerunner. There were those, as there are yet, to hail it as an American masterpiece of epic scope. It sets a very great goal: it would be "a census spiritual of our America." And without question it fares widely and fearlessly in the society of 1920 — which already is not quite modern society. But it lacks the dramatic power of *The Ring and the Book*, of which it sometimes reminds one; it lacks the condensed vigor of the *Anthology*. Frankly, it becomes tedious and boresome. Mr. Masters writes too easily. His facile blank verse slips along without distinction and for the most part without poetical lift or power.

More than once I have made a brave beginning on the *Domesday Book*. . . . Some time I may read it through, but not now.

Vachel Lindsay's *The Litany of Washington Street* (Macmillan, \$3) is not poetry, except for the quotations from Whitman which are liberally interpolated. The author explains,

characteristically: "It is a kind of Washington's birthday, Lincoln's birthday, Jefferson's birthday, and Whitman's birthday book." More concretely, it is a collection of essays on the heroes just named, upon the Middle West, and upon what Mr. Lindsay finds interesting in contemporary American life — or, as he would say it, United States life. Added to this is that flummery of distinctly American demi-mysticism in which Mr. Lindsay delights.

I like Mr. Lindsay's essays. I like his frank hero-worship, which strives to make good lusty legends of his heroes; I like his whimsy, his spirit of a crusader, his fine prejudices. This book is individualistic and readable. It is antipodal to most of the writing by the pooh-bahs of our modern criticism: these latter call themselves "debunkers," while Mr. Lindsay, if one may be allowed the word, is openly and proudly and purposefully a "bunker." He believes, in other words, in building up and elaborating all the fine legendary materials we have.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

The latest volume in Macmillan's "Philosophy for the Layman" series is *What Is the Mind?* by George T. W. Patrick (\$2.50). Professor Patrick once more justifies his reputation as an authoritative but popular writer upon philosophical subjects. Defining psychology broadly as "the science which studies the activities of living individuals as they adjust themselves to their environment," and discarding to a surprising extent the cumbersome terminology of that science, he outlines the chief theories which seek to define mind. Though he reviews very briefly the ideas of the ancients upon this subject, as well as those of earlier psychologists, the book is chiefly designed as an exposition of recent theory. Behavioristic in tendency, the conclusion is not that of a mechanistic philosopher. The nearest Professor Patrick comes to a definition is this sentence at the end of the little book: "It should be clearly understood that the view of the human mind as the characteristic activity of a highly complex and highly integrated human organism imposes no limits on the powers of the mind . . ."

Psychology for the Writer, by H. K. Nixon (Harpers, \$2.50), is a suggestive and readable book. Though some things in it (as the tests applied to style) are of curious rather than utilitarian interest, the greater part of the work is sound and sensible.

Any writer is interested in psychology from three distinct and separable points of view: he is interested in the psychology of his characters, of his readers, and of himself as writer. Each of these fields is a big one, and much of modern psychology applies to each. If Mr. Nixon had definitely and consciously recognized these divisions, his book would have been more valuable to writers. As it is, the application of the psychological theories discussed to the first field named — that is, its use in the creation

of fictional material — is the chief contribution of this volume. There remains to be written a book which will discuss the psychology of reading in a manner helpful to the writer, and another on the psychology of writing.

Alfred Lawrence Hall-Quest's *It's Not Our Fault* (Horace Liveright, \$2.50) is a study in the fields of ethics and sociology quite as much as in that of psychology. It is badly named; its title is a part of an effort which is too prominent to popularize its material. It is, in fact, an examination of the history and causes of human misbehavior. Thus the work has a very wide scope. I am not a competent judge of it, but it seems to me to be done very well. I note some lapses, as anyone informed in a special field is likely to do in this "outline" type of book; and I do not share all the author's opinions, by any means. Nevertheless, I can recommend Mr. Hall-Quest's comprehensive treatment of misbehavior to MIDLAND readers as both interesting and instructive.

AVIATION AS EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

I believe *Sky Larking* is Bruce Gould's first book (Horace Liveright, \$2.50). It is, however, such a pleasant series of essays that the friends it is sure to make will hope for many successors.

Mr. Gould writes of the pleasures of flying, of his contacts with aviators, of some of the great aeronautic incidents of recent times, of the future of flying. The book has facts enough to please the reader who craves information, and it has enough feeling and good writing to please those who are not so utilitarian. A good book for the train, camp, or easy chair. . . . Mr. Gould is a New York newspaper man and playwright, of Iowa origins. I don't mind confessing to a little pride that he was able to sit through some lectures I once gave on American literature. But my commendation of this book does not rest in any degree upon my approval or disapproval of his conduct in that matter. . . . The volume is attractively made, with some striking illustrations in gravure by Cosmo Clark.

POSTHUMOUS STORIES BY TWO ENGLISH WRITERS

A reprint of another of the stories by "Saki" has been issued by the Viking Press in binding uniform with the series of his works. This is *When William Came* (\$1.75), a pre-war story by way of warning England against a probable war with Germany. It portrays conditions in an England under the conquering heel of the Kaiser. Like all of Munro's work, it is really intelligent as well as clever; but the very bizarrerie seems to me to detract somewhat from this piece. . . . The characters are excellently done, and the menus for the meals are fascinating. . . .

Mary Webb's *Armour Wherein He Trusted: A Novel, and Some Stories* (Dutton, \$2.50) will delight the lovers of Mary

Webb's delicate and admirable writing. The chief piece in this volume is an uncompleted novel; but, after all, the fragment has a kind of finished unity, and might well have been given to us without explanation. The short stories included are all pleasing: I find it difficult not to like everything from Mary Webb's magic pen. Martin Armstrong, who writes the introduction, is certainly wrong in depreciating the sketchier of these short pieces. The fact is that if you like Mary Webb you will like all these without much discrimination. I like such phrases as "When the rounded fruit softly acquiesced to ripeness," and this: "I am sure that if my aunt had been the only woman in a castle full of men she would have been safe. Those her face did not affright her tongue would. Yet it is an ill thing in me to jest upon the poor soul, with God now this long while, so I hope and pray, though ever and anon fearing otherwise, for she was a very curst woman."

EPISTOLARY

I know of no type of literature fitter for a bedside shelf than a collection of letters, unless it is a chatty journal. And it is no disparagement to consign a book to a bedside shelf, where none but pleasant and gentle spirited books should be, inducing happy dreams.

Dorothy Van Doren has edited a collection of letters by seven famous women under the title of *The Lost Art* (Coward McCann, \$3). It is an anthology of great variety and considerable interest. Mrs. Van Doren brings together Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Wollstonecraft, Abigail Adams, Charlotte Bronte, Jane Welsh Carlyle, and Jane Austen — good letter writers one and all.

BIOGRAPHICAL

CLEANTH BROOKS, JR., whose home is in Shreveport, La., contributes his first poem to THE MIDLAND in this issue.

ELLEN GLINES is a resident of San Juan, Porto Rico. Her work has found a place in most of the poetry magazines.

ROLAND ENGLISH HARTLEY will be remembered for earlier short stories, notably "Destiny" and "The Late Joseph West."

HAROLD CROGHAN is a young writer. He is a Spanish teacher in the Lane Technical High School, Chicago.

GRACE HUNTER sends us these poems from Grinnell, Iowa.

LEO L. WARD is an instructor in English at the University of Notre Dame. He has contributed several recent sketches and stories to THE MIDLAND.

DORIS LUCILE BRADLEY lives in Beatrice, Nebraska.

